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CALIFORNIAN SONNETS AND POEMS

Sonnets, American

V/

Stewart

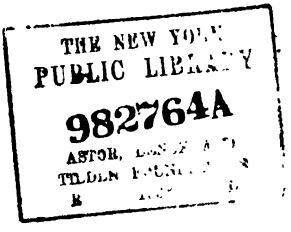
CALIFORNIAN SONNETS AND POEMS

Californian Sonnets
and Poems

By

MILTON S. STEWART

NEW YORK
JAMES T. WHITE & CO.
1920



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KALI YUGA

KALI YUGA

VISIONS OF THE BLACK AGE

I

PLUNGED in tremendous midnight, I lay bound
In dungeon darkness, far from wholesome morn,
Until at length the heavy chains unwound,
My sleep was stirred, and through the Gates of Horn
The pale presentment of a dream was born.
It was a thing of nightmare that drew near,
Big with some shapeless evil and forlorn;
The midnight trembled into waves of fear;
Then blasts of chill and frightful breath were blown,
And round my sleep the spell of phantasy was thrown.

II

2

I dreamed an evil dream that I was lost
And wandered on in darkness and alone,
Until it seemed as if my pathway crossed
A wide and sterile field, wherein had grown
No other seed but clotted heaps of stone.
Those wretched lumps were monstrous and alive,
Instinct with trouble they could not make known;
It was a fearful thing to see them strive
In that dumb agony, for all were red—
Each crawled upon the ground, and as it moved it bled.

3

Then, as it seemed, a mist of horror rose,
  Surrounding me by slow degrees with dread
That coiled its way into my heart and froze;
  The air turned into poison overhead
  And weighed me down as with a hand of lead;
All insects withered up that dared to fly—
  The very birds were shrivelled and fell dead—
A yellow sickness festered in the sky
And ate the solar orb into a square,
While dire contagion spread and scattered everywhere.

4

Then on my eyes a sudden darkness fell,
And standing in that stony field and bare,
Amid the glooms of that benighted Hell
I heard confused and raving voices swear
In maledictions of infernal prayer;
And all cried out, but there was one that spoke
With unctuous platitudes and phrases fair;
I heard that sanctimonious voice invoke
A triple imprecation on mankind—
A curse of ruin, guilt and infamy combined.

5

Then woeful tales and prophecies were told
Of how the human race was stricken blind,
The earth decayed and overgrown with mold
Because the sun of reason had declined,
While o'er the fallen ramparts of the mind
The shrouded specter of damnation walked
With feet that left a burning track behind;
And then I heard no more of those that mocked,
But flames burst forth, and faces seem to glare
Out from red torture-halls of madness and despair.

6

I stood beside a vast and open pit,
A charnel crater full of deadly air,
And saw upon the hither edge of it
Steps leading down into that hateful lair.
I deemed that hardly any man would dare
Even in his most frantic dreams and wild
To venture willingly upon the stair,
Or in that sink of foulness be defiled;
Yet even now, as if in my despite,
The shadow of a man came slowly into sight.

7

This man in vanity and pride descended
From stage to stage of that remorseless flight,
Unknowing where the fatal path portended,
For in his hand was an extinguished light,
A smoking lamp that seemed to scatter blight
And poured black rays of solid darkness out.
So he went down to the devouring night,
And its thick folds encompassed him about;
But presently he fell into a snare—
His groping hands touched mire, dead slime and human hair.

8

Deep in the desperate center of the land
Death throve and reigned upon a rotting chair;
He touched the victim with a fleshless hand,
And named himself the purchaser and heir
Of this man's body that was standing there.
He claimed and seized his flesh as lawful prey,
Unrolling deeds of parchment which declare
The man was duly sold and sworn away,
And these he read aloud to legalize
And mask iniquity with pretext and disguise.

9

Oaths, seals and signatures applied to each,
And each was witnessed and confimed by lies.
One was a cunning artifice of speech,
A legal formula that did devise
The man's whole head away, with both its eyes;
It made a forfeiture of all his breath,
Reserving it as an especial prize
To be corrupted and consumed by Death.
One sentence broke his bones, and did not spare
To price and portion each with an explicit care.

10

Then loathsome arms reached upward from the mud,
And multitudes of clutching hands prepare
To strangle him beneath that sea of blood;
I heard him cry, and saw his dreadful stare,
And then he vanished in a crimson flare.
But next a woman with a starry crown
Was standing in his place, and seemed to tear
In haggard rage the bosom of her gown;
Her roving glance was eyeless and insane
As with shrill voice she laughed because the man was slain.

II

She yelled aloud, and shook her swollen fist,
And by her were a dagger and a chain;
Around her head a brood of serpents hissed,
And stung her forehead with a purple stain;
Those writhing snakes were rooted in her brain,
And lashed the whiteness of her cheeks like whips—
A wreath of fire that bound her brows with pain;
And there was foam of frenzy on her lips;
But when she stabbed herself I seemed to know
That millions were struck down and murdered by the blow.

12

The wheels of Destiny began to grind,
And giant winds commenced to rise and blow;
I heard the mainspring of the world unwind,
Tall mountains shook, and melted down like snow;
Red rivers, spouting in the plains below,
Filled up the sea; wave, earth and sky confounded,
Roared on in vast and awful overthrow;
But I, with havoc and dismay surrounded,
Was snatched by whirlwinds shrieking past in strife
From death to death, from dream to dream, from life to life.

1917.

CALIFORNIAN SONNETS

CALIFORNIAN SONNETS

PART I

NOT FOR ME

NOT for me will she wear her bridal veil,
Nor shall the sweetness of her love be mine.
The tendrils of her heart will never twine
Intimate round me, but could I prevail,
Love's mighty effluence would never fail,
But glance seek glance like blindness seeking light,
And meet in swift communion, through the sight
Flashing assurances. There was a tale
Of such a love as this once told to me—
Half-credulous by hopes that rose in vain;
And therein everything as it might be
Was told aright, yet I was not to gain
The constant kindness of her smile and speech,
Her hand to cherish, and her heart to reach.

I COULD NOT REACH

I COULD not reach her, could not make her see
How fair a place for her my heart possessed,
How half herself in me was manifest;
I could not touch her, though she seemed to be
Near and familiar as myself to me.
There was some thwarting veil of things unseen,
Some blinding darkness coming in between
Her and my love's strong importunity.
Oh, to rise up in confidence and slay
This evil thing—to cut this darkness through
With flashing words like swords—to clear the way
From heart to heart! but so I cannot do
Lest she turn further from me, causing more
And blinder darkness than there was before.

HELPLESS ARE WORDS

WORDS are but helpless, impotent to clear
The mists that so obscure me to her sight,
And wholly helpless are these words I write,
Who have no voice to make the Muses hear,
No skillful sorcery to draw them near,
Nor power at all to curb their liberty.
Yet all desires are gathered up in me
To one ambition. How can I not fear
To fail in that! What wonder if I cling
To that one object, when, were it displaced,
My life would seem a poor and shrunken thing?
But other lives go constantly to waste.
Why not mine also? Evil eateth soon
Even the argent circle of the moon.

O ARTEMIS!

AGAIN, O Artemis, in circle bright
Thy heart of silver in the sky appears,
And I again look upward to the light
That shineth sweetly as in former years.
I sacrificed upon the hills tonight,
And lit the fire, and offered thee a prayer,
And laid fresh flowers upon the altar there,
Performing faithfully the ancient rite.
Remember, Goddess, that symbolic fire,
The meaning of the flowers, and let thine aid
Fulfill my wish! Thou knowest my desire
And how I saw thee in a mortal maid.
Oh, grant my asking! Yield her heart to me!
But yet, in giving, turn it not from thee!

OH, LOSE HER NOT

OH, never lose her, Artemis, but rise
Daily within her! Stand beside the ways,
Waiting with silver feet and crescent rays
And shining shield before her! In her eyes
Pour from thy flowing fountain that supplies
Light to pure hearts, thy dignity! Dispense
Over and through her thy calm influence!
Let her be perfect in all ways, and wise!
But more than all things else may she remain
Untouched, unblemished, by the sordid stain
Of selfish motives! Nay, if she be strong
Only in this one thing alone, if she
Love all things beautiful and do no wrong,
True to thy light, it is enough for me.

BECAUSE YOU LOVED

BECAUSE you loved all lovely things and true
And seemed to serve them, doing them no wrong,
Not seeking to possess, but to belong
And wait upon them, I, who loved them too,
Saw them abiding, visible in you.
So when I touched you, as with magic rods
Magicians touch an image, as the gods,
Gifted Pandora, and as lovers do.
I crowned you with all goodliness and grace,
Clothed you in delicate imaginings,
As if with light, and looking in your face
Found intimations there of hidden things.
It will be sad if this illusion dies,
And lets me look on you with other eyes.

CAN THESE EYES CHANGE?

CAN these eyes ever change, and on some day
Pass you in disregard? Perhaps I dream,
And love not what you are, but what you seem.
If I know but your shadow, can I say
Whether I know yourself in any way?
Perhaps if you stood clear as Truth, instead
Of veiled in fancies—all ungarmented
By my illusions—I would feel dismay.
Yet no; with doubts like these I am but wound
In blind confusion; and if aught be true,
I know that I have known some part of you.
That part pierced through me like the sudden sound
Of far-off music, and I long to see
Who that musician is. Can you be he?

RELIEVE ME, GODS!

RELIEVE me, gods! Some better thing unwind
Before me! Let some lighter task be found,
Than constant turning o'er and grinding round
In hollow circles of the weary mind
These hard dry pebbles of my thought! Unbind
This tangle of confusion that doth press
Upon my heart with so much heaviness,
Choking it up with grief, for I can find
No recourse, exit, or alternative
To this strong hunger of the heart, except
The very love it seeks! How can I live,
Who never cared for common things, but kept
Only one hope in life that promisd real
Attainment of some tangible ideal!

BOW DOWN TO THIS

BOW down before this madness; nor disdain
To hear me speak, for be assured that none
Will ever prostrate thus as I have done,
Only to you. Not always to obtain
Are offerings like this; nor soon again
Will you find ardent love so finely wrought,
So delicately tempered with chaste thought,
Aesthetic impulse, and the inward reign
Of abstract verities. Were you aware
How seldom men love so, in reverence,
Free from all brutal evil that prevents,
And wrongs and injures love, you could not bear
To let this pass. Why can you not awake,
And love me utterly for Love's own sake?

IT IS FOR LOVE

IT is for love's own sake that I outpour
This great libation of the heart, no less
Than for the finding of my happiness.
And though perhaps this widely open door,
If you still enter not, may close once more,
And grow impersonal, yet than can be
Only when something withers up in me,
And that lies empty which was full before.
Meanwhile I wander in a dream, and meet
At every turn some trifle that uprears
Your sudden image—things wherein a fleet
And vivid likeness of you disappears;
The garment worn by strangers on the street—
A look—a gesture—startles me to tears.

THESE ARE THE WAYS

THESE are the ways she used to wander through,
  Seeing the evening sky, while I saw her;
I walked beside her here, and only knew
  How altogether sweet the moments were.
These are the places where our friendship grew;
  This is the garden where she gathered flowers,
  And here the hammock, where through quiet hours
I swung her slowly as I loved to do;
  For it was happiness to have her near,
Whether in silence or in converse true;
  This is the music she was glad to hear;
These are the books she loved and listened to.
I cannot understand how she could go,
And leave me loaded down with darkness so.

I DO NOT SEEK YOU NOW

I DO not seek you now, as when the fire
  Of glad amazement first within me grew;
  I am uncertain what I seek in you,
What truth lies hid in this obscure desire.
Yet I am ever restless, and aspire
  To some abstract and unimagined thing
  Beyond the power of mortal visioning.
You are my symbol of that lost empire,
And so I reach through you to unseen light,
  And seek your love still, hoping it possess
The precious tincture of poetic sight,
  And some rare inward core of perfectness
That would not suffer from the curse primeval
By which all outward things are pierced with evil.

ALL LIVES ARE PITIFUL

ALL lives are pitiful when seen aright
In naked poverty and impotence,
Bound in the narrow coils of circumstance,
And cheated by the law that sucks delight
From all finalities, and spreads the blight
Of barren imperfection far and wide—
Forever thwarted and unsatisfied,
And ever helpless to redeem their plight.
I with all others turn this wheel around,
Yet search for something lost and half-forgot.
May you seek freedom also, but if bound
To common aims and ways, then heed me not,
For I would lead you to unusual streams,
Endless and deep, where beauty flows and gleams.

IF YOU COULD LOVE ME WELL

IF you could love me well, yet wrongly choose
Some lesser thing, Time will not re-create
Lost opportunity, and so excuse
The error of your choice, or compensate
Your future years, unless another wooes
Your heart to sacrifice, with love as great,
As strange and tender and more fortunate
Than this fair gift of mine that you refuse.
Is love not in you? Surely it is there,
And even if no sign of it appears,
Sometime—perhaps when you are least aware—
It shall come rushing out of you in tears.
Be not deceived by things that do you wrong,
For paltry aims will not content you long.

I CANNOT YIELD

I CANNOT yield, or make my will consent
To this necessity that robs me so;
I cannot yet resign myself to know
The utter loss of Love's abandonment;
For if he breaks the bow of my intent,
What wastes of living must I wander through—
What days of dullness must I waken to!—
When all seems aimless if it be not blent
With him for motive. Will he not compel
Himself to save himself? And need I fear
That he can leave me if I love him well?
Oh, I will call to him, and hope to hear
The flute of Krishna, like an echo fleet,
Or some spent arrow falling at my feet.

I STROVE TO SAY

WHEN with imperfect words I strove to say
How exquisite a gift I sought from you,
I did not ask unfairly, since I knew
I asked no more than I could well repay,
Having no selfish impulse to betray
Your utmost tenderness, or put to shame
Love's purity of attribute and aim,
Or wrong his gentleness in any way.
I loved you outwardly because you wear
A garment of sweet youth and maidenhood,
And inwardly, because you understood,
And loved all truth and beauty; yet I swear
That these are but sustained and justified
By some more noble quality beside.

I DID NOT HOPE

I DID not hope that even Love could be
Complete fulfillment, but that you might share
My restless search, my passion and despair;
That I might turn to you, and daily see
The light come in your eyes for love of me,
And daily take you by the hand, to fare
On eager search for breaths of purer air,
And fading glimpses of divinity.
Oh, might we both be children, and explore
All lovely things! and I would crown your hair
With wildflowers such as Proserpina wore.
And listen to you while your lips declare
Low-spoken oracles beyond compare,
For me to treasure up and ponder o'er.

MY LIFE MAY BE NO LESS

PERHAPS my life may be no less complete
If from afar I see Love's golden wing
Beating the azure air and vanishing;
Or if I sometimes only chance to meet
With fading footprints of his shining feet,
At which I stop to tremble, and to sigh
With useless passion at the empty sky,
Feeling my heart suffused with impulse sweet
Of longing and despair. For there would be
A greater disappointment and defeat
If Love half gave, and half withheld from me
The boundless sympathy that I entreat.
How could I love him truly if he came
With scanty gifts, unfaithful to his name?

THIS WEB OF VERSES

FROM this small web of verses slowly spun,
And from the days of careful labor spent
In shaping shapeless thought to permanent
Poetic forms, and measured words that run
In smoothly-flowing music, I have won
Some half-glad hours of solace and relief;
And some small pleasure fashioned out of grief
Rewards, perhaps, the work that I have done.
I ask no more than this, if it be true
That nothing more complete is ever found;
And for yourself I give these thoughts that grew
On mountain tops by moonlight, to repeat
And echo through your life-time with a sound
Heart-piercing and mysteriously sweet.

CALIFORNIAN SONNETS

PART 2

OVER THE BROOK

OVER the brook great sycamores outspread
Their massive arms in arches that uphold
A roof of fading green, that turns to gold
Of autumn leaves all withered up and dead,
That loosely hang, and drop from overhead,
And waver downward one by one, to rest
Upon the flowing stream, or in some nest
Between the stones that fill the canyon bed.
These waters murmur of no recompense
For wasting beauty, nor for my own youth,
That rusts away unused. The aching sense
Of unfulfillment stuns me, and in truth
I feel myself a very child, that stands
With bruiséd heart and blindly-reaching hands.

OH, COMFORT ME!

OH, comfort me from this divine unrest,
And slack the tension of the knotted heart!
Give me sweet peace and silence, and impart
Some quiet end of this eternal quest!
Carry me back to find my earliest
And most loved goddess in some lonely spot!
O Artemis, do thou forsake me not,
But raise me up when I am weariest,
And strengthen me with beauty! Shall I now,
Having this sense of something free and great
Though half obscure and inarticulate,
Desire blurred images less fair than thou?
Would that I chose no other love but thee
And thy unseen immortal purity.

IF ARTEMIS SHOULD COME

WHAT if the goddess cometh in disguise
Without her slender bow and silver shafts?
What if she comes in secret, bearing draughts
Of moonlight with her, meaning to surprise
My heart with sweetness, and reward my eyes,
That watched and waited through so many years?
And if with covered forehead she appears
Hiding her crescent, would I recognize
And find her out, and knew her, and devise
Some feeble words of welcome and of prayer?
Or would she smile, and suddenly arise
In purer radiance than I could bear,
Until the flood of wonder caught my breath
And I fell drowning in the arms of death?

WILT THOU WITHHOLD?

HOW long, Immortal One, wilt thou withhold
All the fulfilléd beauty of thy face?
Wilt thou not come, star-crowned and aureoled,
Cloud-robéd, misty, with exceeding grace,
Wide-opening the silver-shedding vase
That with unwearied arm thou dost uphold,
To offer me some ornament of gold,
Some shining token from thy treasure-place?
Oh, cross this bridge and barrier of Time,
And come at last, for I have waited long,
Assailing thy deaf ears with pleading rhyme,
Invoking thee in unavailing song!
When wilt thou stand before me statue-pale,
And with fair hands thy face of light unveil?

OH, COME

OH, come!—before mechanic Time has paced
The measure of my youth,—before the rage
Of vivid impulse fails, when crawling Age
Infects the heart, and lays the body waste.
I would not stand dishonored and defaced,
Ashamed before thy beauty, to display
The sad habilaments of dull decay
By which the soul's free spirit is disgraced.
When shall thy golden plenitude appear?
Where is that Spring that I have never seen?
Lo! how I work through dark delusions here,
And hold but one small leaf of living green!
Come! Let the barren days be overpast,
And these dry branches blossom forth at last!

WITHIN SOME ISLE

WITHIN some cloudy island of the west
Where Dian comes with all her face alight,
The arc of flame above her forehead white,
The argent rays upon her starry crest—
If her unearthly form were manifest,
If I should see her passing in the night,
If I should strive to stay her, and arrest
Her coursing on in silver-wingéd flight,
Would she not slacken in the eager chase,
But only shine afar and glimmer past?
Would she not even pause a moment's space,
Or yield one little hand to my embrace?
If I besought her, would she not at last
Unveil the sudden brightness of her face?

IN THE DEEP MIDNIGHT

IN the deep midnight of my wandering
How strange it were—how I would be amazed
To see thee stand with silver spear upraised
Or notch the fatal arrow on the string!
Swift from the bow the eager bird would sing
Straight to my heart, and I would hear behind
The rushing of the multitudinous wind,
And look into the open eyes of Spring.
Let Death, the vulture, dip his crimson beak,
But do thou only linger at my side
To lay kind hands of comfort on my cheek;
So I would fade as flows the ebbing tide,
In wide-eyed quietness and perfect rest,
Calm as thy sinking crescent in the west.

THOU WHOM I CANNOT SEE

THOU whom I cannot see, but only feel,
Thou hand invisible to which I cling,
High mountain-peak of Poesy, bright Wing
Sustaining earthly song—thou Chariot-Wheel
Of Passion racing to the fair ideal,—
To thee, O Artemis, I daily bring
The fruitage of my life as offering,
And hunger toward thee with a vain appeal!
O Spirit of all Beauty, are thou here? . . . .
Ah, but she will not answer or appear;
She has no local form nor dwelling-place,
No human mother yet can give her birth,
But some frail tinctures of immortal grace
Make images of her to haunt the earth.

DESCEND!

DESCEND, O fairest object of devotion,
Whose effluence is on the waves that seethe
Under the moon, upon the wide-spread ocean!
Emerge from dumb abstraction, and unsheathe
Thy sword of beauty, thou for whom I wreathe
Fond words of worship round an empty name—
Pale essence of an unsubstantial flame
Invisible as is the air I breathe!
Thou are as silent as a word unspoken,
Impalpable as that white glance of thine
That makes the lucid waters move and shine,
When on the sea the moon's one light is broken.
Descend upon the earth, and let there be
Some beautiful embodiment of thee!

COULD I CREATE THEE

ALMOST it seems that from this heart of mine
I could create thee to the outward sense,
Cause chording notes of music to combine,
And rush together in rich confluence
Of clashing harmonies so forceful strong
As would compel thy birth—yea, would condense
And sound thee into form by violence,
In one tremendous tidal wave of song.
How else may I obtain thee, and enclose
Thy viewless essense in a human form,
Perceptible and personal and warm?
How prison it like beauty in a rose?
For still I crave a form of thee, complete
With eyes and lips, with human hands and feet.

SHE LIVES FOREVER

SHE lives forever in the tones that sing
In forest waters; in the fall and flow
Of liquid echoes that dissolve and go,
I hear the ripple of her laughter ring,
And her familiar voice sweet-cadencing.
Hers is the beauty that is bending low
The humid arch of the celestial bow;
She is the harmony in everything.
I feel her gazing when the skies are blue,
And see the sad, short days of winter bring
From her the wreathéd beauty of the Spring—
A rose, all heavy with the morning dew—
A branching pine-tree when the moon looks through—
The flashing upward of a skylark's wing.

SOME PICTURE DIM

OH, might I melt into some picture dim
Of cool, green trees and streams and shady rest,
Or meet with mighty Love and follow him
And take his feathered arrow in my breast!
So might I ease this panting heart, oppressed
By such dull sorrow as the skies contain,
When dark with cloudy grief and somberest,
Heavy with unshed tears of summer rain.
As I have seen the dark sky rift and break
When torrent showers of misty gold fell through,
So might the rapture of my heart awake,
So would the ardor of my hope renew,
And I be glad for very gladness's sake
As if the wildest of all dreams were ture.

WE DRIFTED

WE drifted by an island of old Greece;
The yellow sunset wavered on the sea;
We were alone together, I and she,
And watched the sun with setting orb decrease,
'Till with a smile of glory and of peace
The sunset brightened, and it seemed there grew
A wind of radiance, that streamed and blew
From the far shining of the Golden Fleece.
We were alone; the purple ocean lay
Flushed with the crimson fire, and in the spell
Of gloaming silence that around us fell
We floated slowly on across the bay,
And saw the little moon with curvéd shell
Drifting above the sunset, far away.

THE SKY

THE sky that like an irridescent shell
  Flushed o'er the purple sea, at last burned low;
Yet in the embers of the clouds there dwell
  Soft, muted colors of the afterglow.
  The moon shot silver from her bended bow,
And slanting arrows of the starlight fell
Into the dusk and shadow of a dell,
Where shy, sweet flowers and tall, red poppies grow.
I thought she sat with upturned face and fair,
  And one round shoulder gleaming cold and white
O'er which the tresséd river of her hair
  Flowed darkly, deeply, down into the night—
Or was it but the fall of shadows there,
  And lilies waving in the pale moonlight?

THE MOON'S PALE LIGHT

A SIFTING of the moon's pale light was shed,
Through leaves and branches, and within the space
O'ergloomed with shade, moon-patterned into lace,
The violet dreamed, the lily drooped its head,
And crimson poppies in the darkness bled;
But there was other light in that dim place—
It was the upturned beauty of her face,
By which the myriad souls of flowers were fed.
For there at last I saw her, and a swell
Of fainting music from the asphodel
Mingled with words I could not understand;
Then she was lost in clouds that seemed to chase
Dark shadows o'er the moon, as waves erase
A writing sculptured on the ocean sand.

O IVORY FEET!

O IVORY FEET! O hair of cloudy gold!
Ye eyes of splendor that I know so well,
Those conscious eyes, that open and unfold
Like starry blossoms of the asphodel!
They are the Shining Ones who sentinel
The perfect beauty that no man may hold,
The vision burning in my dreams of old,
The beauty none may conquer or compel.
Out of her shining eyes she doth create
The brightness burning in her silver shell;
But who may see within her heart? Too late!
O beautiful but uncompassionate,
I know thee as thou art, unearthly cold,
A thought divinely fair but desolate!

I DREAMED

I DREAMED that I awoke and found her gone,
Uplifted on the rosy wings of Dawn;
I saw the emptiness where she had lain,
And startled Joy, fleet-footed as a fawn,
Sprang sudden from me and was cleft in twain,
Transfixed and stopped and in an instant slain.
I was bereft and utterly alone,
And felt the pillars of my life withdrawn,
And in my dream I heard the ocean moan,
For all around me was the voiceful sea;
Unnumbered tears kept dropping down like rain,
And standing there amid enormous pain
I shuddered, like some winter-withered tree
Swpet by the bitter wind of misery.

I LOOKED FOR HER

I LOOKED for her among rock-ribbéd mountains,
I searched for her beside the wave-spread sea,
I saw her faint reflection in still fountains,
But could not clasp it, for it was not she.
I could not find her, and there seemed to be
Some unredeemable and huge mistake,
Some dream from which I struggled to awake,
And my lost joy came never back to me.
But I could not forget her, and pursue
Some vulgar hope and cheerful destiny,
Or love my life as happy mortals do,
For I was passion-torn and piercéd through;
My life was cadenced in a minor key,
Actæon-like, devoured by phantask.

I PAUSED

IT was a silent house I paused before,
Some ruined mansion of departed mirth,
That stood alone amid exceeding dearth.
An antique garland hung beside the door,
The wreath that some Greek-hearted lover wore
When such as he yet lived upon the earth,
When Love itself was held a thing of worth
As it was holden in the days of yore.
This was the wreath he had suspended there
As votive-tribute of the love he bore
Because a woman's face had once been fair;
This was the wreath that she disdained to wear,
These were the leaves that never crowned her hair,
And now both face and garland were no more.

I CLIMBED THE STAIR

I TOUCHED the brittle leaves and climbed the stair,
And crossed the threshold, meaning to explore
And with disturbing feet to traverse o'er
This palace of deserted rooms and bare.
But in the central hall I was aware
That festal cups lay downcast on the floor;
Strange desolation seemed to rise and pour
From out their hollow rims, and everywhere
There was a reek of ruin in the air.
Still-statued Silence in that empty hall
Gloomed fearfully, with long-suspended breath;
Dim shadows crept and gathered on the wall,
And I could see descending over all
The beautiful obscurity of death.

AMONG THE ROSES

SHE lieth down among the roses red;
The asphodel is on her closéd eyes;
The richness of her unbound hair is spread
Divinely round her, as upon the bed
She lieth still and cannot move or rise.
She lieth still as do the sculptured dead,
The light that lay upon her eyes and lips
Forlornly faded in obscure eclipse.
No more the favor of her eyes is shed
Upon my darkness; in a silver spell,
With wreathéd roses at her feet and head,
The last bright arrow of her glance is sped.
Gone is her glory like a star that fell—
O pale, pure splendor of her eyes, farewell!

THE SYCAMORES

AS some defeated and defenseless king
At last puts off the purple robe he wore,
Or stands with hopeless arm upraised to fling
His useless crown upon the palace floor,
So from its nerveless limbs the sycamore
Lets fall its old and autumn-withered wreath,
That is so faded and forlorn a thing,
To waste and crumble on the ground beneath.
But now the little stream whose waters bore
Dead, shipwrecked leaves of the departed Spring
To be cast upon some deserted shore,
No longer flows, no more is murmuring;
But in great circles, with outstretchéd wing
The watchful buzzard has begun to soar.

CALIFORNIAN SONNETS

PART 3

NOT SHE

NOT she who looks on me with worldly eyes;
Not she whose little kindness is outworn,
Whom my imagination did adorn
Too perfectly for her to realize.
Does not her silence even now despise
My heart's disclosure? Have I not been torn,
And is not hers the bramble and the thorn
That in the heart's most nervous tissue lies?
Harsh and insensible, it is not she,
Who saw no flame of noble thought arise
Upon the altar of my sacrifice,
But one within her who is yet to be,
One great in kindness, who could recognize
The larger pride of my humility.

SHE ROBBED

SHE robbed me of irreparable years,
And kept the pleasure of her youth from me;
Her scarlet anger, like a flame that sears,
Shone in the mirror of her eyes, and she
Who was the object of my constancy,
Whom I had hoped for when my heart was strong,
Took wretched tribute of the soul's hot tears,
Consumed the substance of my life with wrong;
Hers was the voice that ever in my ears
Fled like the dying cadence of a song.
Yet all my passion was reserved to her
Whom still the ardor of my thought pursued
In human likeness and similitude;
I was her beauty's priest and worshipper.

O THOU IN WHOM

O THOU in whom I would, yet cannot, see
  Some other wisdom than the world has taught,
Some spark of spiritual genius, free
  From the small circles of concentric thought,
I did not dare demand so much from thee
But by strong faith in thy divinity.
  Were I not certain that thy soul had caught
  Some flash of God's great lightning—were there nought
But the poor form of unheroic clay,
No godlike impulse unsubdued—no ray
  Shot by a daimon—if thy soul were blind,
Could I have held thee in such honor? Nay,
  No doubts would wrong thee if I once could find
  The generous errors of a lofty mind.

THE LIGHTNING

THE lightning flashed before him, and he cried,
"O mine at last!"—but then the falling rain
Beat down in torrents of despair and pain
That blotted out and utterly denied
All that the flashing hope had prophesied.
And so the purpose of his life was slain,
The treasure of his heart poured out in vain,
Like water lost upon some desert wide.
But Time flowed onward as a tolling bell,
And waves of useless objects rose and fell;
And he complained, "Oh, hard to be endured!
Confined within this solitary cell
Of individual life, I am immured—
Even as beasts in hollow places dwell!"

THE BITTER OCEAN

O BITTER ocean of eternal strife!
O piteous seclusion and profound
Of human islands that the sea flows round!
The barriers of individual life
Shut like the sea about them, and the sound
Of isle that shouts to isle—the distant cries
That from the vastness of the sea arise—
Faint on the voiceless ocean and are drowned.
Walled in with solitude, each walks apart,
Penned in the strait enclosure of his heart;
Each is an isle as other islands are,
Each in a separate dream of life enfolded,
Within the little world his thought has molded,—
Each has the ocean round him as a bar.

I ASKED

I ASKED for love that is no slave to pride,
  Unangry love, that hath no power to sting,
Love that is not found wanting or belied,
  But unreserved and all-surrendering,
Wherein conjoin and nevermore divide;
Desire, that thirsteth on unsatisfied,
  And generous devotion, that doth spring
  From noble natures in their passioning.
I asked for love that hath no hard alloy,
  No gross or mean indignity of will,
  Nor aught ungracious to estrange and chill,
Deflower the heart's fair garden, and destroy
  (As ruthless children trample down and kill)
The sensitive and fragile bloom of joy.

TO SAVE

I ASKED sufficiently of love to save
The destitution of a life outworn,
To be the column on whose strength is borne
The high entablature and architrave
Of heavy-builded years. I did but crave
Some closer kinship than I yet have known,
A love responsive to the love I gave,
One human heart to mingle with my own.
In this vast universe of living things
Is there no love to shade me with its wings,
No spark of being that to mine is bound,
No soul's companion who may yet be found?
This is the vision that disturbs my sleep;
For this I waken in the night and weep.

MY HEART'S COMPANIONS

WHERE are my heart's companions, linked to me
By ties unbreakable, the friends I hold
By indissoluble decrees of old?
I am the severed branch—where is the tree?
Where can the likeness of my nature be?
Or in the starry amplitude of space
Is there not even a familiar face,
Nor any partner in my destiny?
For them I-err and wander, and obey
Until the circuit of my exile close,
Unspent affinity that first arose,
Though starved eternities may pass away
'Till fruitless Time brings forth another day,
Ripe with divine reunion and repose.

DISMEMBERED

ALONE, dismembered from my heart's allies,
I live surrounded by an alien race;
Like some stray star that wanders through the skies,
Lost from its constellation, and must trace
Strange pathways through illimitable space,
So in this journey that before me lies
I move alone amid the alien eyes,
And bear my solitude from place to place.
Yet by the force impelling star to star,
By the attraction that doth urge and bind
Each stellar outcast to its place and kind,
I, too, am drawn and guided from afar;
Beyond the zodiac I hope to find
The shining House where my companions are.

THE ROSES MOCK

O ROSES! Roses! ye do mock my sight,
Staining the air with fragrance and with fire,
Wounding the fainting air with colors bright.
Yea, stabbing me with beauty and desire.
I press my lips upon your perfect bloom,
O ardent images of all delight,
Kiss with my eyes your crimson leaves and white,
And in deep sighs your honeyed breath consume.
But ah, they wither, waste themselves, and wane,
Like sickly moons o'ertaken by the day;
What ghastly element do they contain,
By some incredible and fearful spell
Bending them down to torture and decay?
Slain with the roses lies the asphodel.

AS I REVOLVED THESE WRONGS

AS I revolved these wrongs and sorrows o'er,
Like the vague murmur in an ocean shell
I heard faint prophesying voices tell
Of wave-enwreathéd islands, on whose shore
All poor and perished flowers are born once more,
Raise themselves up again to bloom in pride,
And with their burst and broken hearts untied,
The roses, too, their ruined grace restore.
There, saith the tale, all hapless things regain
Their shattered glory and their stricken might;
And sometimes, when the many-fingered rain
Touching the earth, plays music in the night,
I sail and search for them in ways forlorn,
Led by the lost moon's light, and sunken horn.

FAILURE

OUT of my failure shall be born success;
All true and beautiful desire in me,
All nobleness of will that I possess,
Changed by the heart's divinest alchemy,
Shall recombine, transform and coalesce;
The pure residuum of thought shall be
Merged in immortal form and potency,
Transmuted into everlastingness.
Half-deeds and failures scar my life on earth,
Yet what I lose shall be another's gain;
This life that seemeth of so little worth—
All I endure of weariness and pain—
Shall be the means in some remote rebirth
By which that other shall at last attain.

ANTARYAMIN

NOT I but thou, O Master of my fate,
Shall be the arbiter of loss and gain;
Whether thy unseen hand shall liberate
Or bind some hopeless hope with bar and chain,
I dare no longer challenge or arraign,
But will endure thy justice, and await
Whatever destiny thou wilt ordain,
Unhappy though it be, and desolate.
Even in my most passion I have laid
This rebel and resisting heart of mine
Upon thy formless altar, and have prayed,
"The unknown issues of my life are thine;
Make due adjustment, yet if it may be,
Take not away my one desire from me."

SEA SONNETS

OF

SANTA BARBARA

I

BLUE Summer's breath is in the air today,
And moves amid the drifting clouds that lie
Becalmed within the ocean of the sky,
While racing on the beach with manes of spray
The white sea-horses throw themselves away;
They rear and run and stumble, plunge and fly,
Or, riotous with speed, go dashing by
Down the foam-lippéd margin of the bay.
Faint shadows from the idle clouds are thrown,
And shreds of color from the sky are blown
O'er azure meadows of the changeful sea,
Where streaked and ribboned with a paler hue
The ocean-acres of celestial blue
Lie blossoming in fair serenity.

2

THE ocean murmurs, and the sea-bells chime.
As, rythming in vague immensity,
The ancient-voicéd and tumultuous sea
Reiterates from immemorial time
Huge tones and harmonies of ocean-rhyme,
In whose vast, mournful sound there seems to be
An epic sorrow and monotony,
Sea-musical, incessant and sublime.
This fluent ocean that is clasped and curled
Around the far circumference of the world
Resounds forever in a wild unrest;
Like rushing of innumerable feet
The waves fall in confusion and retreat,
Swelling in slow procession from the west.

3

THE sea's innumerable voices cry;
Its million hands reach upward on the shore;
The restless waves besiege the land, and roar
In gusty passion when they fall and die.
The breakers roll with arching crests flung high,
And plunging on the beach, they ravage o'er
The worn, wave-tortured sand, and evermore
They drain and trickle backward with a sigh.
The ocean lives. Its giant pulses beat
Forever in these waves that toil and run
Through dateless years, 'till Time itself be done;
Each in its turn goes downward to defeat;
They waver, and are broken one by one . . .
Still, still the waves their ancient song repeat.

4

BLUE-BOSOMED ocean! Thou whose tides o'erflow
The ruin of the world's lost continents,
Whose waves have poured in stormy affluence
Upon the dying and convulsive throe
Of isles that sank in terror long ago,
Sucked down like ships—thy waters quest and climb
And dash forever on the cliffs of Time;
The drifting winds sweep over thee, and lo!
There comes the wild, wave-music and the motion—
The echoings of awful harmony
That men have heard when standing by the sea.
And felt their hearts with some divine emotion
Lift like the swelling surges of the ocean,
And move out grandly as the tides to thee.

MEDITERRANEAN SONNETS

1907-8

ON SICILY

THESE are the hills of Sicily, and there
Within their circle lies the lovely vale,
Across whose floor once walked the goddess pale
In search of lost Persephone the fair.
Then sudden winter hardened in the air,
And life was withered 'till the curse was past;
But when the Lost One came again at last
The land burst into blossom everywhere.
Thou wast a grief to Ceres, and since then,
Because of thee, have many mortals sighed;
Yet thou didst comfort *her*—remember when,
Lost in thy valleys, Athens bled and died;
As thou was pitiful and kind before,
Could not thy power make good the loss once more?

Messina.

SONNET ON THE NILE. NO. 1

THOU art the Nile, the River of the Past,
whose waters feed the ancientest of lands;
Thy course is set amid the desert sands,
And over thee a glaring heat is cast
Down by the sun; but thou dost roll thy vast,
Slow current ever onward with no haste,
Making a trail of life across the waste,
A winding Horn of Plenty, till at last
Thy waves forget the region of their birth;
And where they come to rest within the sea
No man had heard of any spot on earth
That was their source, nor guessed where it could be.
Thou art eternal, but thy temples rust,
Grow old, and fall and crumble into dust.

Luxor, Egypt.

SONNET ON THE NILE. NO. 2

THE Stream of History, whose hidden springs
  Pour year by year their flood upon the plain,
  And put into our hands the endless chain
Of all the Past, yet hide the source of things.
Thy tombs hold thirty dynasties of kings
  From Menes downward, and a thousand more;
  But who can say how many went before?
Thebes is a name; her pride has taken wings;
Her hundred gates are now no longer found.
  Upon thy margin cities come and go,
Flower, fade and die, and sink into the ground.
  Yet still unchanged thine ancient waters flow:
On either side the deserts stretch away,
And as it was at first it is today.

Luxor, Egypt.

THE PHŒNICIAN COAST

I SAIL where sailed the merchant men of Tyre,
Where Sidon's captains, searchers-out of gain,
Bore back their gathered wealth across the main
From farthest lands, so great was their desire.
And this in them was even as a fire
That drove them restless over seas unknown,
And made them leave on barbarous coasts their own
Crude, skillful arts, and into all inquire.
So from the spoils of traffic and the oar
Phœnicia's rival towns grew rich and great,
And ere their strength was withered up by war
Their trading daughter-city rose in state,
For Carthage was their offspring, as men say,
And in her time was prouder far than they.

TO DAPHNE, MY SISTER

DAPHNE, your lovely name still lingers here
Where your bright namesake changed into a tree;
Do you recall how pleased you used to be
In reading that fair tale? You should be near—
Perhaps you are, and maybe you can hear . . . .
Well, anyway, in time I know that you,
If living, would have come to Hellas, too,
And loved her purple hills and waters clear,
As you loved those old myths. I could have shown
The road where Theseus came, and pointed out
The very spot where Dictys' net was thrown;
"This," I would say, "may be the isle, no doubt,
Where Circe dwelt", and then you would have seen
Iolcos and the fountain of Pirene.

Athens.

ON LEAVING GREECE

I NEVER dreamed our common earth could be
So wondrous fair as this, though many a year
Some certain instinct taught me to revere,
And build up altars in my soul to thee.
But now, alas! the Attic mountains flee;
The rock of Corinth after them retires,
And Iris stoops, to tinge with colored fires
The crown of Helicon across the sea.
O land immortal, beautiful and bright,
Land where the Day first blossomed out of Night!
I love yet leave thee, looking back in vain;
Thy image, though, shall in my heart remain,
And thy fair influence be with me yet.
Farewell, O Hellas!—I shall not forget.

OTHER POEMS

SPRING has awakened on the hills, and burst forth from the trees in the canyon, but into my heart it has not entered yet.

Today the golden glory of the world cries loudly. The summer radiance lights up with vivid green these tree-encumbered slopes, and turns to cerulean blue the wide-spread ocean. And the flood of color beats beautiful upon my sight, but it does not shine into my heart.

The day fades out to evening, and in the western sky clouds burn in quiet crimson. There is a distant melody of birds; then, as the manifold veils of night descend, darkening the world, deep stillness gathers, but that peace does not enter my heart.

TO A GREEK STATUE ON AN ANTIQUE TOMB

I DO not know, yet I will prophesy,
And certify, and say, there is no Death.
No final, lasting loss of aught that lives,
Is beautiful and loved, for now today
I dimly see how such a thing may be.
Thy fairness is not stone, although the rock
Bears it upon its surface as a robe;
Nor is it Form, although the Form doth hold
And fix it on the marble's heaviness,
Until the Form itselft doth change away.
The fairness of the Form is Mystery,
An immaterial Fire, a Force divine,
A living Influence or Consciousness,
That here hath spread itself upon thy shape,
And so become perceptible to me.

I say we love not rocks, nor softest flesh,
Nor words, nor deeds, nor anything at all,
Except this conscious Force or Entity
That clothes the chemic grains and globules fine—
Sense-moving things of no intrinsic worth—
With foreign virtues native to itself.

I say that Conscious Life, intangible,
Reaching its mystic rays we know not whence,
Reflects itself upon the solid world
Through brains and nerves, creating forms and things,
And so reveals itself, and is perceived
Through brains and nerves again. This influence
Is—must be—deathless. Say the wave subsides;
The wind behind blows on, and if the storm
Doth also cease at last, it is because
Unconscious force was gathered there by chance,
With no internal strength, no live desire
To hold itself together and cohere,
And from an inward source of energy
Resist extenrnal friction.

982764A

Thou art fair,
And as thy form wears down and breaks away,
The fairness is not lost; I mean to say,
Its virtue lies not in the stone at all,
But in the Life which made it, and that Life—
Its cause, the thing which it doth represent,
By which the fairness *is*, and which it *means*—
Survives, be sure, and can again restore
Its visible expression in the world.

So if thou are the form of one who lived,
I think that she is living yet, and may
Sometime and somewhere shape another form
Expressive of her self, and reappear
In semblance no less fair. Or else, if thou
Dost only image forth a sculptor's thought,
Then his alone thy fairness is, and he,
Though long since vanished, may come back again—
Be manifest once more—and in new forms
Delight our eyes with visions of himself.

May it be so! I cannot say to thee,
"Such fairness fades and dies. It is in vain."
Thy presence scorns all logic, soothes all doubts,
And I can only ask, "*How* is it saved?"
Well, I have tried to answer, guessed my guess,
And phrase it thus: "Inevitable decay
Attacks not precious things, things having life
And innate loveliness, but only slays
The forms and combinations physical
Through which these living things are manifest
To sight and sense; dissolves and dissipates
The instruments of clay, which things with life
Each moment mold for transient use, to deck
In their lent lovliness and so be known."

Athens, 1908.

SAPPHIC STANZAS

ROUND me flock the Hours, and with feet reluctant
Pause to watch and pain me with weary visions,
Troubled dreams, whose images rise and linger
Sighing, beside me.

High in heaven burneth the gem of Lyra,
Yet no sound descends from the strings celestial;
Long I wait, then turn to the never-fading
Diadem royal.

Underneath its rays I remember dimly
All the tale of lone Ariadne's sorrow
When she woke in Naxos, beside the ocean,
Lying forsaken.

One by one the Hours are departing slowly,
Would that I might see ere they bring the morning
Thy loved face upturned in the twilight, softly
Gazing upon me.

Much I long to know of thy presence near me,
Hear thy voice and listen the words soft-spoken,
Then to take thy hand, and in silence see thee
Tenderly smiling.

Santa Cruz Island, 1906.

FRAGMENT

RAISE the veil and loose the zone,
Still the secret is her own;
Each to other is unknown,
Each is evermore alone.

Broken heart and barren bone
Harden into heavy stone;
Can the curse be overthrown?
Can the struggle and the groan
For the severed life atone?

TYRANNUS OMNIPOTENS

Nineteenth Century Science Dreams about the Nineteenth Century God

GOD still begrudged men wisdom. Age by age
They wrested Truth from His unwilling grasp,
And gained more power, while He took little heed
But left them to themselves in cold contempt,
Save that He still exacted all the tax
Of servile worship due from His creation.

Men grew to know the Master of the Spheres,
The Apathy that helped them not at need,
And hated Him as Tyrant of the world—
A sullen Power with sympathy for none,
Nor any wish but sacrifice and praise
And human adulation. Time went on,
And mortals struggled forward step by step;
The aid that God denied, each gave to each.
And mutual action compassed many things.
All gave their lives to Science, laying bare
Each detail patiently, in hope to win
Some secret of great moment. Some were wise,
And these God slew the first, but not before
They poured their knowledge out into the world

For those that followed. So it was the race
Accumulated lore by slow degrees,
Till Death was subject to their will; and each
Had leisure to investigate and learn.
Then they grew mighty, seizing on the hid
And awful forces of the universe
For their own use, and God begrudged it all,
Yet took no heed, in insolence of strength.

One man there was, most wise of human kind,
Whose hand had opened every fastened door
That barred his path, and gained the power to turn
The planets in their courses. These things done,
He dared an awful deed, and sought to find
Through silent centuries that power supreme,
The Secret of Omnipotence, which gives
Infinite rule, and constitutes the god.

He won the prize divine, and as his hand
Was stretched to grasp it, God beheld the act
Knew the rebellious purpose, and upraised
A blasting bolt, terrific to destroy.

Too late! The deed is done, and naught avails
To quell the mortal now, grown God indeed;
And God, no longer God, is now become
A slave to that which He Himself created.

1906.

PAPYRUS LEAF

LIST to me, O ye people, for I who speak am wiser even than Pyrrho, son of day-bringing Phœbus, and my words are Truth.

The Universe is, and was from the beginning, and it extends everywhere without limit, and in it all things exist but Emptiness; and although it is itself Infinity, yet Infinity does not exist within it. And the Universe is Substance, and when Substance was, then also was Time; and at the same moment Substance moved in Time, and there was Motion, out of which we came, and the world, and into which we shall sometime return again, for this Motion endureth forever, so that nothing is immortal. And as Substance moves it changes, and is never twice the same, so that sometimes it is so fine that no man ever saw it with his eyes, or felt it with his hands; and sometimes it is so thick that it seems not to be; and if you should take twelve pipes and blow upon them all at once, and then do so again, the sound would not be quite the same, for one little note would be different.

And the motion is ceaseless and eternal, so that somewhere it produces all things; and if a mortal were given wings of light, and power to wander undissolved in all places, he might leave the stars behind,

and speed through silent years where naught but blackness could be seen in the skies around; he might pass through centuries of fire, through seas more vast than the sky itself, through universes more solid than brass, and other strange sights he would surely see, so many that all would seem the same; but at last he would find the likeness of all that his heart desired, whatever that might be, and escape from all that his soul hated, however far it followed.

So that all things are, and yet nothing is, for one is as the other. And the things we think are fixed, but happen for a moment, and all things that seem, are but illusions, and none of them are true, but all are uncertain. And we ourselves are but illusions, and to us some illusions seem pleasant, and others seem painful, and the former we seek, and the latter we avoid, but in reality it is not so.

For each of us is but Substance in Motion, and whiles we seem great and whiles we seem small, and many shapes we take, and sometimes we are, and sometimes we are not, and in many places we are scattered, and from many sides are we gathered up, and we are different from moment to moment, and yet always we are same.

This I say, I who am wise indeed, and my words are Truth.

1905.

EPIGRAMS

"Horas non numero nisi serenas"—
  Long ago was this motto made for us;
But I would improve it, and have it remain thus:—
  "Nisi tecum non numero horas."

* * * * * *

Time has a Golden Touch and with it turns
  To fairer semblance all he takes away,
Yet when it once is stored within his urns,
  No power can bring it back from yesterday.

* * * * * *

Even holiest Helicon,
Lofty to look upon,
  Is made, like most mountains,
Of sandstone and silicon.

VERSES

Prefatory to "Sigurd," by William Morris

NOW hear of the Sorrow of Odin, and deeds that were done of old,
The days of the golden Sigurd, and the curse of the ancient gold;
And learn of fair lives wasted, huge woes, and bitter shame,
Of evil begetting evil, and vengeance wrought in vain;
The quenching and bane of the God-kin, and love that can no more be said
Than the words Allfather whispered in the ear of Baldur dead.
It tears the heart within us such exceeding griefs to hear,
The net by the Norns strong-fashioned, and the coming of Twilight near;
Yet never in human language shall a mightier tale be told
Till Fenrir's bond be broken, and his chain no longer hold.

TO ROBERT BUCHANAN

BY the western ocean,
Restless in its motion,
Often do I hearken with thy music in my ear;
From far away in Britain
The words that thou hast written
Follow me to where I am and linger by me here.
Now thy day is over;
Thou dost never waken,
And I may never see thy face or by thy hand be taken.

The faith that never falters,
The love that never alters,
Both were given thee at first, and kept until the last;
Noble is the story;
Great should be the glory,
For bravely hast thou done thy part, and given all thou hast.
Though the world begrudgéd
Recognition due thee,
Fame shall grow upon thy dust and honor come unto thee.

Can ever life be wasted,
The cup be only tasted?
And can it be that all thy years of song were spent in vain?
Are we but deceiving
Hearts forever grieving,
And is the certainty of Hope but sophistry of pain?
Rather let me fancy
Thou art past the portals,
And seeking him, who went before, among the bright immortals.

Often to thee turning,
Patience from thee learning,
I who wait while thou art gone find comfort in thy name;
Surely rest is given
To those who long have striven,
And gods there are who will not let thy faith be brought to shame.
Surely thou hast earnéd
All that poets long for,
The nameless glory singers seek, the gift they give their song for?

1906.

VERSES

(See "The Last Christians" by Robert Buchanan)

STORM in the night, Buchanan;
A desolate world forsaken,
And the dripping eaves of thy dwelling
By the crying winds are shaken.

Long is the night, Buchanan;
And the lamp of thy faith lies broken,
For thy voice seems lost in the tempest,
And the dark sends back no token.

Woe unto thee, Buchanan;
And woe to thy generation
For the withered flowers of the Promise,
The darkness and desolation!

Yet strengthen thy heart, Buchanan;
  Though the world be worn with weeping,
A blessing to us in our blindness
  Is the vigil that thou art keeping.

For strong is thy voice, Buchanan;
  At times in our ears it is ringing,
And the sorrow of loving and leaving
  Is soothed by the sound of thy singing.

For we know thou art steadfast, Buchanan,
  Still waiting and dreaming and yearning;
That thine eyes are still watching the heavens
  And the fire of thy spirit is burning.

So peace be unto thee, Buchanan;
  And at least let this comfort be thine,
That to us who have listened and loved thee
  Thou thyself art the token and sign!

1906.

APOTHEOSIS OF THE FOOTBALL

OH, the merry Stanford football,
Scarlet with the blood of Berkeley!
Favor me, O Muses, while I
Sing this most inspiring subject!

Once you were an humble parchment
Filled with sausage-meat or bacon,
Little guessing, little dreaming
Of the honor that awaited;
And while you were thus adorning
Piebald back of pig or puppy,
You were doubtless kicked and curséd
By the scornful mouths of mortals;
For unlike the hide of Apis
There was naught in your appearance
That could warn them, or could tell them
You were not of common race.

Strange indeed and unexpected
Are the lots the gods bestow on
Men and dogs and pigs and women,
And the destinies they find!
Strange indeed but sure and certain
Are the dread decrees of Fate.
And for you it was determined
That you should become immortal
That you should become a planet,
Shining like the moon at midnight
High above the proud and haughty—
Foreordained a hide most holy.

So it came to pass that you were
Chosen to be made a football;
You took on a shape most graceful
While they filled your cheeks with Wind;
You became the flattered sphereoid
Used upon the Stanford Oval.

Not a mortal dared to mock you
When he saw you shooting skyward
As an eagle cleaves the air,
Or beheld you falling downward
Hit the ground with thump tremendous.
Each man knew that when he saw you
Hugged so tightly by the players
He would straight be torn to pieces
If his impious lips derided,
If he mocked the God of Stanford.

Then upon the day of battle,
When the clans were all assembled,
When the Stanford horns were tooting
And the Berkeley ribbons blew,
How the men were filled with fury
When you came upon the field!
How the fighters longed for action,
Seeing red in earth and heaven!

Greatly on that day immortal
Did you justify your redness;
How you thinned the ranks of Berkeley,
Crushed the outcast race of Berkeley,
Smote the foes of Gods and men!

Then your glory was completed,
And you were become more sacred
Even than you were before.
You were raised aloft and lifted,
Carried far in fair procession,
Finally placed within the temple,
There to feed on human worship,
Openly proclaimed divine.
Last you grew to girth enormous
And are now become a planet
Shedding light eclipséd never
On the faces of the faithful.

All mankind is now your servant;
Nations bow before your altars,
And the priests who tend your worship
Are the proudest of the proud.
Much I fear your power and glory,
And am fain to have your favor,
I who sing in pious numbers
Of your apotheosis.
Grant me then, O orb most mighty!
By the Hog from which you came,
That I ne'er may lose my senses,
Or neglect to praise the Game!

Stanford University, 1905.

COMMENTARY

On "Fine Weather on the Digentia," by Robert Buchanan

POOR Quintus Horatius Flaccus is dead now,
Who believed in the doctrines of Epicurus,
And his scandalous verses no longer are read now,
For his easy opinions have ceased to allure us.
He firmly maintained in a long declamation
That the "greatest good" lies in mastication
(A creed that's well suited, it must be confessed, to
A very large part of the men it's addressed to),
And he freely admitted a predilection
For the drinking of grape-juice without restriction.
More indolent-natured than old Omar Khayam,
He worried but little concerning "who I am",
But studied his feelings; to ever reform him
Was hopeless, and Omar would certainly scorn him.

Anacreon was more of Flaccus' feather,
Though his (wine) skin was not of Roman leather;
(There's a difference due, as all admit who know man,
To a natural difference 'twixt the Greek and Roman);

Yet not one of the three but was mighty at drinking,
And all spent their lives in describing their thirst;
The state of their souls was most shocking I'm thinking,
And I really can't tell you which one was the worst.

However that may be, pray do not forget this:
They lived mid the faults and the sins that beset this
World ere the time when Christianity gave it
Self-respect, sending Hell and the Devil to save it.
Oh, let us give thanks for the times that we live in,
Now that Virtue to Vice is no more known to give in!
Though by the profane I shall scarcely be credited,
I swear that Horatius would now be unedited,
Were it not for the fact that just one man was bold enough
(Perhaps in despair that his works had not sold enough,
Although to know better he surely was old enough)
To depict good Horatius in terms not quite cold enough;
Or, speaking more strictly, get Flaccus to muse on it,
And then to translate from the Latin his views on it.
Thus, whether or no the good public would look at it,
Mr. ROBERT BUCHANAN at once wrote a book at it,
Which demonstrates well that few poets have wit enough
To know when for the good of their name they have writ enough,
For I hav'n't a doubt but that this was the one reason
He was hated by critics as though he had done treason.

But if Quintus Horatius Flaccus were living here
He wouldn't have nearly so easy a time of it;
(I assure you it's nothing but truth I am giving here,
Although I have trouble in making a rhyme of it).
He'd put milk in his bowl, and would ne'er dip a chin in it
Until he were sure there was no trace of sin in it;
He would know that if, living yet, grace had not lit on him,
And his judge after death would be certain to sit on him,
And he's spend all his life in anticipation
Of that dreaded post mortem examination,
On which would depend his eternal salvation.
He would quickly accustom himself to sobriety,
And his conduct be always the pink of propriety,
Transformed to a shining example of piety.

So let us be glad that we live in the present times,
When all wicked men like Horatius are fled and gone;
For although we no longer indulge in such pleasant times,
Yet we hope to make up for it all when we're dead and gone!

1905.

WATCHER OF SUNSETS

WATCHER of lonely sunsets o'er the sea,
Star-worshipper, I had when I was young
A poet's heart, but not a poet's tongue,
And loved old gods that long had ceased to be.
For Greece was my heart's home. The
Of tall, pure Doric columns soothed my eyes;
I breathed the azure of Hellenic skies,
And her immortal life was strong in me.
But as I grew, the heavy Sense of Things
Spread over me the shadow of its wings,
And soon I saw that Death was sure and strong,
That human life is strange and full of wrong,
And then I dared not hope to find repose,
But sought the living source of human woes.

TO CELIA THAXTER

O GENTLE dreamer, lone and lowliest
Of those who sing, how thou dost love the sea
And those bleak isles that were a home to thee!
Thou art apart from all. Would I possessed
Some little share in thy abundant rest!
Would I might know thy warm and humble heart!
Would that I were as gentle as thou art!
There on those barren isles thy hand caressed
Each drooping flower, and pure imaginings
Filled thee with love of beauty, thoughtful mood,
A quiet joy in small and simple things,
Tinged with the sadness born of solitude.
Sweet Celia, thou art haunted Nature's child,
Moved by her subtle grace and sorrow mild.

IN SICKNESS

IF I depart, it is not in disgust,
  Nor hating life, which seems to me most fair;
But all my limbs drag heavy in the dust,
  My body's weight is more than I can bear,
And, though the blade is ever free from rust,
  I find the sheath already thin with wear.
I chose the best, and knew that it was good,
  And found about me more than others find;
I had small time to win the things I would,
  And little was my lore of any kind;
That little, even, I could ne'er express,
  And now what strength I had has left my hand.
I sought Infinity, yet none the less,
  Weary and spent, I sink upon the sand.

Oct. 1906.

THE SILENT TEARS

THE silent tears that uninvoked arise,
Soft messengers of heart divinely human,
Do but declare that thou art all a woman—
And yet a child in beautiful disguise.
Lovely and loving one, unclose thine eyes—
Truth's lighted temples, where sweet vows are made—
Yet by their glances thou shalt be betrayed
To conquering arms, until thou dost devise
A ransoming caress to break the chain,
And hardly purchase thy release again.
O fair in face, with fairer, rarer heart,
Wherein the fires of rose and lily blend,
May only happiness be where thou art,
Nor any evil on thy head descend.

SPEAK!

SPEAK! Become audible, that I may hear
The sweetness of thy presence, and rejoice!
Cleave the dividing silence and appear!
Speak! Let the air be fruitful with thy voice!
Flow forth in potency of sound—draw near
And touch my sense with living tone and word!
Speak! Let thy heart grow vocal and be heard!
Pour like a flood of music in my ear!
I wait and listen for the sound of thee;
Name me my name in thy beloved speech;
Send out thy vibrant voice to gladden me;
Greet me with gracious words, I do beseech,
And let the parting of thy lips set free
The dumbly prisoned thought I cannot reach.

MORNING

THE mystic rites and ceremonies rare
That mark the daybreak even now transpire;
Beyond the hills the darkness turns to fire,
And soon the breath of Dawn blows faintly there
To paint the eastern clouds. Then in his lair
Apollo stirs and wakes, and lifting up
His blinding orb from out its golden cup,
He guides it slowly onward through the air.
So dawn by dawn the immortal charioteer,
Urging his car in upward-speeding flight,
Bursts through the clouds and shines upon us here,
Driving afar the devastated Night;
And day by day the liquid skies unfold
Before his lyre and burning brows of gold.

Yosemite, 1909.

EVENING

THE ceremonial Hours at last prepare
Their evening sacrifice, and burn away
The rich, red heart of the expiring Day,
While from his breath dissolving in the air
The clouds take fire. And then within his lair
Apollo sinks to rest, and laying down
His golden rays and thousand-pointed crown,
He hides from mortal sight his glowing hair.
So ends the ardor of the Day; but soon
There rises up the pale and perfect Moon,
Walking the waves of melancholy Night,
And looking downward as she passes by,
Trailing upon the sea her robes of white,
Rolling her hoop of silver in the sky.

THE DAY'S EXHAUSTION

SICK with the day's exhaustion, I would creep
Into the soft embrasure of the dark.
I would extinguish each familiar mark,
And let the rising tidal waters sweep,
Engulfing and oblivious and deep,
O'er the subsiding land, till in the surge
This time-worn continent of thought submerge,
And all be sunken in the waves of sleep.
Unfathomable Sleep, thou gift supreme,
Encircle me with thine enclosing arms!
Hide the implacable and weary Day
Beneath those sable vesture-folds of dream,
And draw me down with drowsy-muttered charms,
Soft-breathéd words, that whisper me away!